سُورَةُ الْعَادِيَاتِ

The Loyalty We Demand but Fail to Give

SURAH AL-ʿĀDIYĀT - VERSES 1-11

The horses give their full effort at their rider's command. Where do your obedience and strongest effort go?

K. Mufti | الطالب الفقير

A Raid Becomes a Mirror

Picture the world that first heard this surah. In Makkah, horses charging at dawn meant danger. What followed could affect a tribe's wealth, honor, and survival.

Allah takes a scene the first listeners knew, feared, and admired, and turns it into a mirror for the human heart.

وَالْعَادِيَاتِ ضَبْحًا ۝ فَالْمُورِيَاتِ قَدْحًا ۝
فَالْمُغِيرَاتِ صُبْحًا ۝ فَأَثَرْنَ بِهِ نَقْعًا ۝
فَوَسَطْنَ بِهِ جَمْعًا

1. By the charging horses, panting hard.
2. Striking sparks with their hooves.
3. Raiding at dawn.
4. Raising a cloud of dust.
5. Then entering the center of the enemy ranks.

TAFSIR NOTE

Two Interpretations in Classical Tafsir

HORSES

Warhorses charging into battle. This is the more common interpretation and the one followed in this booklet.

CAMELS

Camels moving during the rites of Hajj, an interpretation reported from ʿAlī and others.

Both interpretations show animals giving their full strength to the task before them.

Five Movements of Total Effort

The five verses build one complete picture: panting, sparks, dawn, dust, and entry into the enemy ranks.

1	SOUND	**Panting.** You first hear the strain of the horses' breathing.
2	IMPACT	**Sparks.** Hooves strike stone hard enough to throw sparks.
3	TIMING	**Dawn.** The raid reaches the enemy at the moment of surprise.
4	MOTION	**Dust.** The horses move so forcefully that dust rises from the earth behind them.
5	DESTINATION	**The center.** The horses enter the middle of the enemy ranks.

GEM

Nothing is held back. Breath, strength, timing, silence, and direction all serve one mission.

Why الْعَادِيَاتِ (*al-ʿādiyāt*) Is Feminine

The word الْعَادِيَاتِ (*al-ʿādiyāt*) is feminine plural. Under the horse interpretation, it points to mares. Raiders valued mares because they could remain quiet and avoid neighing, which could reveal their position. Their speed, strength, silence, and direction all served the mission.

LANGUAGE INSIGHT

Each فَ adds the next action without delay:

sparks, dawn, dust, then entry into the enemy ranks.

After five rapid images, verse 6 gives the reason for the oath: the human being is ungrateful to his Lord.

REFLECT

Where does most of your effort go?

VERSE 6

The Reversal: From the Horse to the Human

إِنَّ الْإِنسَانَ لِرَبِّهِ لَكَنُودٌ

Truly, the human being is deeply ungrateful to his Lord.

WHAT THE OPENING SHOWS

The horse gives its strength, accepts danger, and goes where it is commanded.

WHAT VERSE 6 EXPOSES

The human being receives life, provision, guidance, and forgiveness from Allah, yet answers those gifts with ingratitude.

GEM

The horse's visible obedience and total effort expose the human being's hidden ingratitude.

WORD INSIGHT

كَنُودٌ | kanūd

Kanūd describes a person who keeps count of every hardship, delay, and disappointment, while overlooking the blessings Allah keeps giving. He remembers what went wrong and forgets the countless things that went right.

Arabic also uses *kanūd* for barren land. Rain falls on it, yet nothing grows. In the same way, blessings keep reaching the person, yet gratitude does not grow in the heart.

The word can also describe someone who uses Allah's gifts in ways that displease Him, or looks only at the gift and forgets the Giver.

LANGUAGE INSIGHT

Three layers of emphasis

إِنَّ: "indeed."

لَ: added emphasis.

The sentence form: an established condition.

Together, they present kanūd as a settled human tendency, not a passing accident.

WORD INSIGHT

لِرَبِّهِ | to his Lord

The accusation is personal. He is ungrateful to the Lord who nurtures and sustains him.

REFLECT

When you lie down at night, what do you count first: your problems or Allah's blessings?

The Human Knows, and His Love of Wealth Is Fierce

وَإِنَّهُۥ عَلَىٰ ذَٰلِكَ لَشَهِيدٌ ۝ وَإِنَّهُۥ لِحُبِّ ٱلْخَيْرِ لَشَدِيدٌ

And indeed, he is a witness to that. And indeed, he is intense in his love of wealth.

Two readings of "he is a witness"

1 Allah is the witness.

Nothing about the person's ingratitude escapes His knowledge.

2 The human being is a witness against himself.

In an honest moment, he already knows what is in his own heart.

Verse 8 then reveals what lies behind this ingratitude: fierce attachment to wealth.

WORD INSIGHT

ٱلْخَيْرِ | khayr

The verse calls wealth "the good" because it can feed families, build homes, and fund charity. The gift itself is not condemned.

WORD INSIGHT

شَدِيدٌ | shadīd

Shadīd means severe or intense. The danger is attachment so fierce that the heart expects wealth to fulfill every desire and protect it from every fear.

GEM

The same wealth can become a means of gratitude or a cause of forgetfulness. What changes is what the heart does with it.

REFLECT

When you spend for the sake of Allah, what does your reaction reveal about your attachment to wealth?

Graves and Chests Are Opened

أَفَلَا يَعْلَمُ إِذَا بُعْثِرَ مَا فِي الْقُبُورِ ۝ وَحُصِّلَ مَا فِي الصُّدُورِ

Does he not know that when what is in the graves is scattered out, and what is in the chests is brought into the open?

This is a warning, not a request for information. The human being knows that death and resurrection are real, yet lives as if what is buried will remain buried.

What Is in the Graves

Bodies hidden below the earth are overturned and brought out.

What the Chest Conceals

Motives and secrets hidden within are extracted and brought into view.

WORD INSIGHT

بُعْثِرَ | bu‘thira

The graves are not opened gently. Their contents are overturned, uprooted, and scattered into the open.

WORD INSIGHT

حُصِّلَ | ḥuṣṣila

What the chests concealed is extracted, separated, and brought fully into view.

GEM

The body is hidden in the earth. Motives are hidden in the chest. Both the outer person and the inner person are exposed.

REFLECT

If the contents of your chest were displayed today, what would you be proud to show, and what would you regret?

Al-Khabīr: Allah Already Knew

إِنَّ رَبَّهُم بِهِمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ لَّخَبِيرٌ

Truly, their Lord, on that Day, is fully aware of them.

WORD INSIGHT

الْخَبِيرُ | Al-Khabīr

Al-Khabīr knows the finest hidden details: the quiet motive, the private fear, and the sincere act that no one else noticed.

The Day reveals. It does not inform Allah.

The Day of Judgment does not give Allah new information. What He always knew is made visible, undeniable, and subject to judgment.

LANGUAGE INSIGHT

From singular to plural

Earlier verses speak of "the human being" and "he." The ending says "their Lord, concerning them."

Each person is addressed personally, then humanity stands gathered before Allah.

GEM

Hidden corruption was known. Hidden sincerity was also known. Neither was missed.

How the Ending Answers the Opening

The ending answers the opening.

	AT THE BEGINNING		AT THE END
1	Hooves strike the earth and dust rises.	→	The graves are overturned and the dead are raised.
2	The horses' outward actions are visible.	→	The motives hidden in human chests are exposed.
3	Riders direct the horses toward the enemy ranks.	→	Allah brings every human being to judgment.

The Surah's Argument in Five Stages

1. Oath	Verses 1-5: total effort and obedience.
2. Verdict	Verse 6: the human being is kanūd toward his Lord.
3. Witness and attachment	Verses 7-8: he knows, and his love of wealth is fierce.
4. Exposure	Verses 9-10: graves and chests are opened.
5. Complete knowledge	Verse 11: Al-Khabīr already knew every detail.

GEM

Verses 1 to 5 show the horses giving their full strength. Verse 6 then exposes the human being, who receives everything from his Lord yet remains *kanūd*.

The Mirror Now Faces Us

وَالْعَادِيَاتِ

The horse gives its strength, accepts danger, and charges into the middle of the enemy ranks at its rider's command. The human receives life, provision, guidance, and forgiveness from his Lord, yet remains kanūd.

Fierce attachment to wealth explains that ingratitude. But neither the body nor the heart will remain concealed. Graves will be overturned, chests will be opened, and Al-Khabīr already knows what they contain.

Strength and wealth are not the final measure. What matters is whether they led to gratitude, obedience, and preparation to meet Allah.

REFLECT

The horses give their full effort at their rider's command. Where do your obedience and strongest effort go?

K. Mufti | الطالب الفقير